

A photograph of three children, two girls and one boy, smiling and holding corn cobs. They are standing in front of a classroom calendar with numbers 1 through 13. The calendar is decorated with colorful paper cutouts of animals and flowers. The text "TAKE TIME & LISTEN" is overlaid on the image in a large, white, serif font.

TAKE TIME & LISTEN

When a natural disaster hits your community, everyone is touched by it. Lives change.

Children are one of the most vulnerable groups to disasters. They are sensitive and “feel” the stress of others.

A disaster is often hard for them to understand. They may be emotionally confused or frightened.

These feelings could last for days, months or longer, depending on the situation. These are common reactions to a disaster.

With the support of caring people, children can recover quickly. They are resilient and strong.

As a parent, teacher or caregiver of young children, you can offer strength and guidance by watching for behavior changes, and taking time to listen and talk to children.

COMMON REACTIONS

Here is a list of typical behaviors that children have experienced after a disaster:

- Sleep problems or nightmares.
- Regressive behavior such as bed wetting, thumb sucking or excessive clinging.
- Sadness or depression.
- Physical problems including headaches, nausea, stomach pain, vision or hearing problems.
- Disobedience, fighting or stealing.
- Reluctance to go to school.
- Poor school performance or a withdrawal of interest.
- Inability to concentrate or easily distracted.
- Withdrawing from play groups.
- Unnatural fear of the weather or going outside.

These behaviors should subside within a few weeks or months. Remember to allow children to express themselves and retell their stories over and over after the disaster. It’s a healthy way to cope.

MORE WAYS TO HELP...

By making extra time to support children, you can empower them to heal at their own pace:

- Encourage children to draw pictures or role play.
- Give a gentle hug, kind word or extra moment of your time to reassure them.
- Keep children physically active.
- Relax your expectations for school or work performance for a while.
- Speak simply and answer questions honestly.
- Share your own feelings about the disaster without slipping into too much detail.
- Tell children that they are not responsible for the disaster and explain natural causes.
- Limit media/TV exposure. Replaying the disaster inhibits moving forward.
- Give children something to do that is helpful and age appropriate. Routines are important.
- Avoid separation. Allow the child to sleep in parents' room for a limited time.
- Show children models of courage, determination and coping.
- Take time to calm yourself, so you can provide more support to others.

ASK FOR HELP

For free assistance in dealing with the pressures and aftermath of wind- and-flood related storms, please call:

1-800-850-8775

Trained staff will listen to your concerns, provide information and refer you to other resources if necessary. It's free and confidential.

- If there is a life-threatening emergency, please call 911.
- For Suicide Prevention, call 1-800-273-8255. TTY users, call 1-800-799-4TTY (4889)
- For all other mental health crisis needs, please call the Washington State Mental Health Crisis Line in your county at:

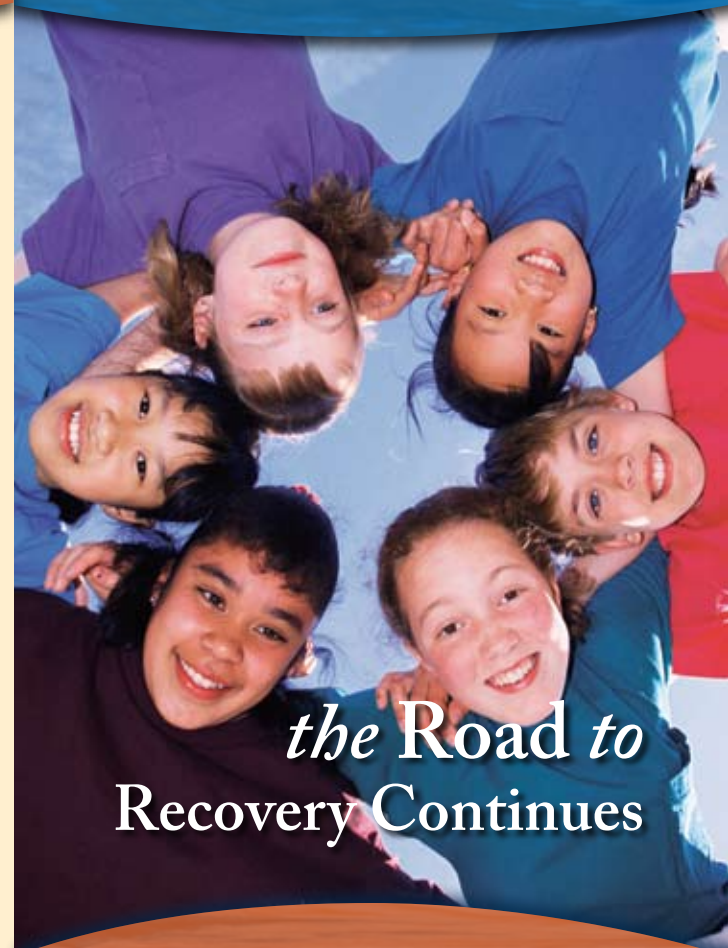
FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT

www.dshs.wa.gov/DisasterOutreachServices



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THE STORM HAS PASSED...



the Road to Recovery Continues

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS,
TEACHERS AND CAREGIVERS
TO HELP CHILDREN UNDER 12
WITH THE AFTERMATH
OF A NATURAL DISASTER

